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Putting Brexit into perspective: the effect of the Eurozone and migration crises and Brexit on Euroscepticism in European states

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the link between recent EU crises and the development of party-based Euroscepticism across Europe. It draws on data from expert surveys with qualitative data to outline the way in which we can empirically see the link between the impacts of the crises in European states, and how far, and in what ways, Euroscepticism has been mobilized by political parties in those states. It identifies four main frames through which the EU is contested in European states which focus on: economic factors, immigration, democracy/sovereignty and national factors. It also shows that there has been a clear difference between the impacts of the different crises. While the Eurozone crisis had a particularly powerful effect in the party systems of those countries most affected by the bailout packages and the migration crisis had a particularly strong effect on party politics in the post-communist states of central Europe, Brexit has had a very limited impact on national party politics, although this may change in the longer-term.

KEYWORDS Euroscepticism; political parties; Eurozone crisis; migration crisis; Brexit

1. Introduction

The EU is often portrayed as being in crisis (Habermas 2012; Ross 2011). Recent years have seen a veritable explosion in commentaries on the EU that have exemplified this narrative. For a political project, it is remarkable how often its very core has been apparently under challenge. One of the ways that challenges to the European project have been manifested has been in the rise of Euroscepticism. And just as there has been an explosion in the crisis narrative about the EU, so there has been a similar dramatic expansion in studies focused on Euroscepticism since the first was published in 1998 (Leconte 2010; Leruth *et al.* 2017; Szczerbiak and Taggart 2008a; Taggart 1998).

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In addition to the rise of Euroscepticism, the EU has faced a number of severe challenges in the past decade. The economic crisis engendered by collapse in the US housing market in 2008 and resulting in the Eurozone crisis from 2010 onwards has had major impacts on many states (Schimmelfennig 2015). In 2015, Southern European states experienced a huge upsurge in asylum seekers many from Syria and economic migrants which resulted in the collapse of some key aspects of EU migration policy with a response in autumn 2015, when the European Council met in an emergency session and issued a migrant relocation plan. Then, in June 2016 the UK voted in a referendum to leave the EU which provided a challenge for the UK in terms of negotiating the terms of 'Brexit' and a potential challenge for the EU itself as one of its major members opted to leave (Bulmer and Quaglia, 2018).

This paper is an attempt to trace the link between recent crises and the development of Euroscepticism, particularly in the realm of party politics. The paper draws on data from expert surveys to outline the way in which we can empirically see the link between the impacts of the crises in European states, and how far, and in what ways, Euroscepticism has been mobilized by political parties in those states. The data for the paper is drawn from two expert surveys that were conducted in 2015 and in 2017 that examined the impact of the Eurozone crisis, the migration crisis and Brexit on Euroscepticism on party politics across Europe. We do, of course, acknowledge that Brexit differs from the other two crises examined in this paper in that it is very much ongoing and one that, at the time of writing is still to fully play out. However, that is also true, to some extent of the other two crises and we still think that it is valuable to address all three at this stage.

After briefly reviewing the 'state of play' as far as (party) Euroscepticism studies is concerned and setting out the methodology employed, the rest of the paper is divided into two main parts. The first addresses the findings of our first expert survey conducted in 2015 which focused on impact of the Eurozone crisis on party Euroscepticism and preceded both the migration and Brexit crises. As well as presenting an overview of which parties took Eurosceptic positions we have also tried to capture a portrait of how the 'European issue' was framed in different states. These results serve a snapshot of 2015 and as a benchmark for us to start to assess how far the migration crisis and Brexit had an impact of the expression of Euroscepticism. The second part of the paper relates to qualitative judgements from our experts concerning the impact of the three crises on party Euroscepticism. It discusses the second set of data from our 2017 experts survey which revisits the question of the Eurozone crises to see what has changed in the subsequent two years, and also looks at the migration and Brexit crises. As well as setting out an overall framework of findings, the paper identifies four clusters of countries' party systems where there were particularly interesting responses

to the Brexit crisis, particularly when the impact of this was re-inforced by or linked to the two earlier ones.

2. Euroscepticism, crises and political parties

There has been a veritable explosion of interest in Euroscepticism studies in recent years (Szczerbiak and Taggart 2017). That work has mainly focused on either Euroscepticism as expressed by political parties or Euroscepticism within public opinion. And we can consider the key findings in terms of those effects before the crises and those that specifically focus on crises effects in these two areas.

The work on public opinion has a long lineage and has very often focused on the link between support for/opposition to European integration and economic factors. The work of Eichenberg and Dalton (2007), Gabel and Whitten (1997), Christin (2005) and Mau (2005) shows that an individual's economic position can have an impact on their attitudes towards the EU. Recent work by Lubbers and Scheepers (2010) shows that there are important national differences in the structuring of Euroscepticism.

A number of studies have addressed the particular effects of global economic and the Eurozone crises. Serricchio *et al.* (2012: 61) examine the link between the global economic crisis and support for Euroscepticism and find that 'national identity and political institutions play an increasingly important role in explaining public Euroscepticism'. Gomez (2015) shows that during the crisis citizens at least partially blamed the EU for their economic conditions. There is, naturally enough, less work on Brexit effects. However, in a recent article investigating the link between Brexit and Euroscepticism De Vries (2017) shows that there is evidence that uncertainty caused by Brexit actually reinforced pro-EU attitudes. We can therefore draw from the literature on public opinion that Eurosceptic sentiment will vary between countries but that we can expect some changes in Euroscepticism in response to the crises.

For the literature that focuses on the party politics of Euroscepticism there has been considerable work on the positions of parties (Hooghe *et al.* 2002; Szczerbiak and Taggart 2008a; Taggart 1998). This has mainly focused on the way that parties expressing Euroscepticism map onto new, or across existing, cleavage patterns so amounting to heterogeneous cluster of parties. As parties expressing Euroscepticism have become more central to their party systems there has been a focus on the impacts of their Euroscepticism (Meijers 2017; Taggart and Szczerbiak 2013).

For the literature on parties there has been less explicit work on the impact of crises on their positions. The 2014 European Parliament (EP) elections saw increasing support for parties expressing Euroscepticism and the elections have become a focus for those looking at party positions on Europe (Hobolt

and De Vries, 2016; Nicoli 2017; Treib 2014; Wilde *et al.* 2014). Hobolt and De Vries (2016) show that the economic crisis had a significant impact on the support for parties expressing Euroscepticism. De Vries (2017) has also done considerable work on this topic showing the relationship in the other direction in which she argues that parties play a significant role in cueing mass attitudes on Euroscepticism. And Rohrschneider and Whitefield (2016) have used a quantitative expert survey to compare Euroscepticism in Western and Eastern Europe as a result of the financial crisis and find that mainstream parties did not substantially change their positions on the EU opening up space for new Eurosceptic parties. This work shows that we can expect some sort of effect of crises but that there will be national variations.

The research that we are presenting here is deliberately designed to complement this existing literature. The existing research emphasizes that national variations will shape the sorts of responses to crises. What our study adds to this is to try to map the nature of that variation. The focus on political parties rather than public opinion stems from the fact that we view parties as partially both cause and effect of public Euroscepticism. The focus on national politics, rather than looking at the EP, is justified because, while the latter provide a useful comparative arena for researchers, we contend that the role of parties at the national level has a far greater impact on the politics of European integration at all levels. The use of qualitative data in this analysis is meant to complement the existing work using quantitative data and allows us to drill down into national contexts in a different manner.

3. Methods

The data for this paper is based on a qualitative analysis of two experts surveys conducted by the authors: in 2015 when we examined the impact of the Eurozone crisis on Euroscepticism on party politics across Europe; then again at the beginning of 2017 when we asked our experts to update this and add data on the impact of the migration crisis and Brexit (defined as the UK's June 2016 referendum vote to leave the EU). For this survey, we drew on the expertise of the 150-strong European Parties Elections and Referendums Network (EPERN).¹

The two surveys were sent to at least one leading specialist on party Euroscepticism in every EU member state (in some cases two or three were consulted) together with Norway, Serbia and Switzerland with survey results analyzed and tabulated by the authors. Respondants were then asked to confirm and comment upon these findings. We are extremely grateful to all of our respondents, although, while we are deferring to them in terms of country-level data, analysis and interpretation of the comparative findings are our own.

This method of conducting expert surveys is associated with what Cas Mudde (2012) has termed the 'Sussex school' of (party) Euroscepticism studies which has provided the data for a vast amount of high quality, internationally recognized published scholarship on the topic, notably a comprehensive seminal two volume collection of case studies and comparative/theoretical papers published in 2008 (Szczerbiak and Taggart 2008a). In reviewing the strengths and weakness of the EPERN database and 'Sussex school' methodology, Mudde (2012: 202) noted: 'The main strength of the Sussex School is validity, i.e., depth, detail, and expertise. EPERN is made up of scholars who specialize in Euroscepticism in a specific country, which they know through and through.' There are problems with, and limitations to, using expert surveys as a method of deriving party positions on issues such as European integration (Budge 2000). Researchers have developed strategies to get around this by: using precise descriptive terms, consulting a range of experts, and measuring both variance of findings among them and from alternative measures (Steenbergen and Marks 2007). Our approach in this paper has been to focus on the quality, rather than number, of the expert(s) consulted, on recognized specialists who have been surveyed previously on Eurosceptic party positions and, therefore, have a clear understanding of what is expected when categorizing a party in this way. We clearly circumscribed: (i) the time period that we were asking them to comment upon and (ii) the crises that we were asking them to consider responses to; while trusting their expert judgements in, and asking open-ended questions about, the terms of outlining the ways in which party Euroscepticism was articulated.

4. Euroscepticism in contemporary Europe

In earlier work we have mapped the presence of Euroscepticism in European party systems which provided us with a benchmark of the shape of party Euroscepticism at the beginning of the 2000s (Szczerbiak and Taggart 2008a; Taggart and Szczerbiak 2004). The research here allowed us to present an update of this to offer a picture of party Euroscepticism in 2015–2017. This covers both 'Hard' and 'Soft' Euroscepticism but we did not in our survey questions differentiate between these forms (Szczerbiak and Taggart 2008b).

In addition to the mapping of party-based Euroscepticism we asked our respondents to describe the terms in which Euroscepticism was expressed in each country. This provided an array of issues and topics and the main themes are summarized, along with an overview of which parties took Eurosceptic positions, in Table 1 below. This includes many parties that are very minor parties and others which command more support. We have also included (where possible) the level of support for each party in the most

Table 1. Party-based Euroscepticism and frames for 'Europe' in European states.

Country	Eurosceptic parties	% support in most recent national election ^a
Austria	1. Freedom Party of Austria 2. Social Democratic Party of Austria 3. Austrian People's Party 4. Team Stronach 5. Alliance for the Future of Austria	20.51 28.82 23.99 5.73 3.53
	<i>Frames:</i>	Immigration Economy
Belgium	1. Flemish Interest 2. Workers' Party of Belgium 3. New Flemish Alliance	3.67 3.72 20.26
	<i>Frames:</i>	Values Immigration Economy
Bulgaria	1. Attack 2. National Front for the Salvation of Bulgaria 3. Bulgarian National Movement 4. Bulgarian Socialist Party 5. Minor parties from 'new left'	4.52 7.28 ^b — ^c 15.40 —
	<i>Frames:</i>	Economy
Croatia	1. Human Shield	— ^d
	<i>Frames:</i>	Economy Democracy Turkey Environmental politics
Cyprus	1. Progressive Party of Working People (AKEL) 2. Ecologist Movement	25.67 4.81
	<i>Frames:</i>	Economy Militarism & Neoliberalism Immigration Sovereignty
Czech Republic	1. Dawn of Direct Democracy 2. Freedom and Direct Democracy 3. Party of Free Citizens 4. Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia 5. Civic Democratic Party	6.88 — ^e 2.46 14.91 7.72
	<i>Frames:</i>	Democracy Sovereignty Bureaucracy Economics Immigration
Denmark	1. Danish People's Party 2. Liberal Alliance 3. Red Green Alliance 4. New Civic Party	21.1 7.5 7.8 — ^f
	<i>Frames:</i>	Economy Democracy Immigration
Estonia	1. Estonian Independence Party 2. Conservative People's Party of Estonia	0.2 8.1
	<i>Frames:</i>	Immigration Democracy/Bureaucracy
Finland	1. Finns	17.65

(Continued)

Table 1. Continued.

Country	Eurosceptic parties	% support in most recent national election ^a
	<i>Frames:</i>	Immigration Economy Sovereignty
France	1. National Front 2. French Communist Party 3. Workers' Struggle 4. Anti-capitalist Party	21.30 19.58 0.64 1.09
	<i>Frames:</i>	Militarism Economy Democratic deficit
Germany	1. Left Party 2. Alternative for Germany 3. New Democratic Party	8.59 4.7 1.5
	<i>Frames:</i>	Economy Democratic
Greece	1. Communist Party 2. SYRIZA 3. Independent Greeks 4. Golden Dawn 5. Greek Orthodox Rally	5.55 35.46 3.69 6.99 _g
	<i>Frames:</i>	Democracy Values Immigration
Hungary	1. Fidesz 2. Jobbik	44.87 20.22
	<i>Frames:</i>	Economy Democracy
Ireland	1. Sinn Fein 2. People Before Profit Alliance 3. Socialist Party 4. Anti-Austerity Alliance (Socialist Workers' Party) 5. Renua Ireland 6. Independents	13.8 3.9 _h _i 2.2 _j
	<i>Frames:</i>	Economy Immigration
Italy	1. Five Star Movement 2. Northern League 3. Brothers of Italy	25.56 4.09 1.96
	<i>Frames:</i>	Values Immigration
Latvia	1. Green-Farmers Union 2. National Alliance	19.53 16.61
	<i>Frames:</i>	Values
Lithuania	No clearly Eurosceptic parties	—
	<i>Frames:</i>	—
Luxembourg	1. Alternative Democracy Reform 2. The Left 3. Communist Party of Luxembourg	6.64 4.94 1.64

(Continued)

Table 1. Continued.

Country	Eurosceptic parties	% support in most recent national election ^a
Malta	<i>Frames:</i> No clearly Eurosceptic parties <i>Frames:</i>	N/A – Economy Immigration Democracy/Sovereignty Environmentalism
Netherlands	1. Freedom Party 2. Socialist Party 3. Party for the Animals 4. Forum for Democracy <i>Frames:</i>	13.1 9.1 3.2 1.8 Economy Sovereignty Democracy
Norway	1. Centre Party 2. Socialist Left Party 3. Christian Democratic Party 4. Liberal Party 5. Progress Party 6. Labour Party <i>Frames:</i>	5.5 4.1 5.6 5.2 16.3 30.8 Economy National sovereignty Moral-cultural values
Poland	1. Law and Justice 2. KORWiN /Freedom party) 3. Kukiz '15 <i>Frames:</i>	37.58 4.76 8.81 Economy Democracy/European 'political class'
Portugal	1. Communist Party 2. Left Block 3. FREE/Time to Move Forward 4. Democratic Republican Party 5. Socialist Alternative Movement 6. Portuguese Workers Communist Party <i>Frames:</i>	8.25 ^k 10.19 .73 1.13 –03 ^l 1.13 Economic Democracy Values Immigration
Romania	1. Greater Romania Party 2. United Romania Party <i>Frames:</i>	1.18 2.95 National Issues (EU recognition of Kosovo, relations with Russia)
Serbia	1. Serbian Radical Party 2. Democratic Party of Serbia 3. Doors <i>Frames:</i>	8.10 1.04 2.28 Economy Values Sovereignty
Slovakia	1. Slovak National Party 2. Freedom and Solidarity 3. Christian Democratic Movement	8.64 12.10 4.94

(Continued)

Table 1. Continued.

Country	Eurosceptic parties	% support in most recent national election ^a
	4. Ordinary People	11.03
	5. Nova	— ^m
	6. People's Party	8.04
	7. We are the Family	6.63
Slovenia	<i>Frames:</i>	Economy
	1. United Left	5.97
	2. Solidarity	— ⁿ
	3. Slovenian National Party	2.2
Spain	<i>Frames:</i>	Economy
	1. United Left (IU)	— ^o
	2. Podemos	21.15
	<i>Frames:</i>	Democracy Migration Women's Issues
Sweden	1. Sweden Democrats	12.9
	2. Left Party	5.7
	3. Feminist Initiative (No longer ES)	3.1
	<i>Frames:</i>	Immigration and Asylum
Switzerland	1. Swiss People's Party	Economy 29.4
	2. Ticino League	1.0
	3. Movement of Genevan Citizens	0.3
	4. Swiss Democrats	0.1
	5. Freedom Party of Switzerland/Autopartei	—
	<i>Frames:</i>	Sovereignty Immigration
United Kingdom	1. Conservative Party	
	2. UKIP	
	<i>Frames:</i>	Economy Immigration

^aElections: Austria 2013; Belgium 2014; Bulgaria 2014; Cyprus 2016; Czech Republic 2013; Denmark 2015; Estonia 2015; Finland 2015; France 2017 (first round presidential); Germany 2013; Greece (September) 2015; Hungary 2014; Ireland 2016; Italy 2013; Latvia 2014; Luxembourg 2013; Netherlands 2017; Norway 2013; Poland 2015; Portugal 2015; Romania 2016; Serbia 2016; Slovakia 2016; Slovenia 2014; Spain (Congress of Deputies – 2016); Sweden 2014; Switzerland (federal) 2015; United Kingdom 2017.

^bStood in 2014 elections in alliance with Bulgarian National Movement.

^cSee footnote above.

^dNot yet contested national election.

^eNot yet contested national election.

^fNot yet contested national election.

^gDid not contest election.

^hStood in 2014 elections in alliance as part of Anti-Austerity Alliance – People before Profit Alliance.

ⁱStood in 2014 elections in alliance as part of Anti-Austerity Alliance – People before Profit Alliance.

^jVarious.

^kContested 2015 election as part of Unitary Democratic Coalition with Ecology Party.

^lStood in 2015 election in alliance with the Labour Party.

^mStood in 2016 election in alliance with Ordinary People.

ⁿStood with Social Democrats but failed to have any candidates elected to Parliament.

^oStood in 2016 election in alliance with Podemos.

Source: Authors' analysis based on expert surveys.

recent national elections. This is to offer an indication of the importance of the parties but should not be cumulated as an aggregate vote share for Euroscepticism given the diversity of the agendas of these parties.

Looking comparatively across the range of data we can make three general observations. Firstly, with only two exceptions all the European states surveyed had Euroscepticism in their party systems. While it differed in strength and form, we can say that Euroscepticism was an almost universal feature of contemporary European party systems making it a near universal staple component of European politics. The two exceptions were Lithuania and Malta, and in the case of Malta, Euroscepticism has been present as a major component in the party system (the currently-governing Labour Party) in the past.

This ubiquity can be seen in two diametrically opposed ways. On the one hand, it can be seen as indicative of a 'problem' in the sense that the presence of Euroscepticism is a symptom of a developing malaise or an inherent existing unstable condition in European integration. An alternative view is that the development of opposition to European integration is indicative of the 'normalization' of the politics of European integration. In this view, the relative absence of opposition previously was more indicative of the permissive consensus and elite-driven nature of the process.

Secondly, Euroscepticism spans the ideological range (Hooghe *et al.* 2002; Taggart 1998), albeit in an uneven way. It exists in parties on the left and right and in established as well as by new political parties. What is perhaps more remarkable is the breadth of different party ideologies that can incorporate some form of Euroscepticism. There are, however, some political gaps in the representation of Euroscepticism and these come mainly on the centre-left and in the liberal party family. Our findings suggested that there did not appear to be any European parties in the social democratic or liberal traditions that expressed Euroscepticism.

Thirdly, Euroscepticism has come in from being an exclusively insurgent peripheral phenomenon to one that is expressed by parties of government and not only by smaller and non-governmental parties. While it has not always become a powerful force, across Europe Euroscepticism has shown that it has the capacity to enter the political mainstream and to become a position adopted by parties of government. Of course, in the most spectacular case the British Conservative Party represents a party of government that has a track record of sustained Euroscepticism but is the only major government party in the EU to have flirted with, and eventually embraced, Hard Euroscepticism as an important component of its ideology. What is notable is that none of these three observations is qualitatively different from what could be observed before these crises (Szczerbiak and Taggart 2008a).

5. 'Frames' of European integration

Using the results of our first expert survey conducted in 2015 we have tried to capture a portrait of how the 'European issue' is framed in different European states. The context of this survey was the fall-out from the Eurozone crisis and the focus was to establish whether and how party Euroscepticism had developed in light of its negative effects. These results serve as a snapshot of 2015 and benchmark for us to start to assess how far Brexit has had an impact on the expression of Euroscepticism. The timing of the survey, which extended into the autumn of 2015, meant that, although our focus was on economic factors, the migration crisis came through in some of the findings.

The observations that we can make based on the 2015 survey thus serve as an important precursor to the current state of party Euroscepticism. Euroscepticism is often portrayed as a monolithic phenomenon but there are ways in which this can be qualified. The key difference lay in the way in which the 'European' issue was framed in different states.

There has been work on the different frames for the European issue but this focuses primarily on the sort of justifications used for the positions taken (Helbling *et al.* 2010). However, given that framing approaches are much more linked to elites or the media, we are using the term in a different sense. We were asking our respondents to assess the general context of the way in which the European issue was framed in a more widespread sense. In many ways our use of frames combines the 'issue-frames' that are used in the literature on US politics (Jacoby 2000) and 'diagnostic frames' that are used in social movement literature (Benford and Snow 2000) to identify the source of injustice to effect mobilization. The malleability of the European issue allows it to be attached to an unusually wide range of policy and political issues that can be used in this way. As a consequence, we could identify what were four different 'frames' that seemed to shape the way in which Euroscepticism was expressed. These frames were not mutually exclusive. We asked whether respondents could identify which issues were most significant or salient in their cases. This was in line with the approach taken by Hobolt and De Vries (2016) identifying different 'bases' of Euroscepticism.

The first frame was economic factors. Unsurprisingly, the framing of Euroscepticism as a critique of the economic failings of European integration was extremely common in the 2015 survey. However, what is also notable is that this economic framing took very different forms. There were many Eurosceptic parties that focused on the EU's 'austerity' agenda. Parties like SYRIZA in Greece had a resonant critique of the EU for implementing what was felt to be a damaging policy of economic 'austerity' in these countries. In contrast parties like 'The Finns' in Finland opposed the EU

for its bailout of countries like Greece. These were clearly contingent positions taken in response to the particularities of the Eurozone crises and the subsequent policies of the EU and the Eurozone countries in response to that crisis. There were also parties that were explicitly against the Euro, such as the radical right 'Alternative for Germany' and communist AKEL in Cyprus. For those expressing a wider economic critique of the EU, there was again something of a set of polar opposites. There were parties like the 'Left' Party in Germany and Fidesz in Hungary who criticized the EU for being too liberal and the French National Front which saw the Union as insufficiently protectionist while other parties like UKIP saw it as too protectionist.

The second frame was issue of immigration. As noted above, this frame had a particular resonance as the migration crisis grew in 2015. However, the importance of the migration issue for radical right parties preceded this in Western Europe. Immigration was of importance primarily for parties in Western Europe historically but there were cases in central and Eastern Europe, such as Hungary and the Czech Republic, where Euroscepticism was mobilized around immigration issues due to the migration crisis and the sudden salience of refugees and the politicization of this policy area.

The third frame was that of concerns about democracy and sovereignty. There was convergence around this as a frame in a number of cases. In practice, there were, of course, differences about whether democracy or sovereignty was the primary focus. A 'pure' democracy critique focused around the democratic deficit of the EU. A sovereignty critique focused on a loss of national sovereignty through EU membership. The two are not necessarily fused as there can be concerns about a loss of sovereignty whether or not the international organization in question is felt to be sufficiently or insufficiently democratic. However, in practice these concerns tended to overlap and reinforce each other with concerns about a loss of national sovereignty being heightened by concerns about the EU's democratic deficit.

The fourth frame captures those cases where there were nationally specific concerns around particular issues that fundamentally shaped the way that the EU was viewed. The two cases that exemplify this are the concerns in Cyprus about Turkey and the concerns in Serbia about the status of Kosovo. This illustrates that, in certain cases, there are conditions that are *sui generis* and cannot be fully captured in looking only for European-wide trends.

Taken as a whole, what the 2015 survey results showed us was that the Eurozone crisis had had an impact on party Euroscepticism, but that this impact was by no means monolithic. It was clear that some very different frames were being deployed in the service of Euroscepticism and that it was important to pay attention to the importance of different national

contexts in shaping which frames were salient to Euroscepticism and playing a key role in determining the extent of Euroscepticism.

6. The impact of Brexit (and other crises) on Euroscepticism

The second part of our data relates to qualitative judgements from our experts concerning the impact of the three crises on Euroscepticism in the countries and this section discusses the results of the second expert survey conducted in 2017. The survey returned to the data generated in 2015 and, in most cases, we asked the experts if the situation had changed since 2015 and to comment on whether the migration crisis and the Brexit crisis had had any impact on the articulation of Euroscepticism within their national party systems. Table 2 below provides a summary where we have attempted to collate and put those comments in a comparative frame. The differentiation of low, medium and high impacts of crises on Euroscepticism is derived from the authors' judgement based on the responses from country experts to open-ended questions which were then validated by the experts themselves. The

Table 2. The impact of Eurozone crisis, migration crisis and Brexit on party-based Euroscepticism in European states.

	EZ Crisis Impact	Migration Crisis Impact	Brexit Impact
Belgium	Low	Low	Low
Bulgaria	Low	High	Low/Medium
Croatia	Low	Low	Low
Cyprus	Medium	Medium	Low/Medium
Czech Republic	Medium	Medium	Low
Denmark	Low/ Medium	Low	Medium
Estonia	Low	Low/Medium	Low
Finland	Medium	Low	Low
France	Medium	Medium	Medium
Germany	Medium	Low	Low
Greece	High	High	Medium
Hungary	Low	High	Low
Ireland	High	Low	High
Italy	Medium	Medium	Low
Latvia	Low	Low	Low
Lithuania	Low	–	–
Luxembourg	Low	–	–
Malta	Low	Low	Low
Netherlands	Medium	Medium	Low
Norway	Medium	Low	Low/ Medium
Poland	Medium	Medium/High	Low/Medium
Portugal	Medium/High	Low	Low
Romania	Low	Low	Low
Serbia	Low	Low	Low
Slovakia	Low	Medium	Low
Slovenia	Medium	Low	Low
Spain	High	Low	Low
Sweden	Low	Low	Low
Switzerland	Low	Low	Low

Source: Authors' analysis based on expert surveys.

points of comparison are with other countries rather than against an objective set of benchmarks.

Our expectation is that the three crises would play out somewhat differently in terms of domestic party politics. We would have expected the Eurozone crisis to have the greatest salience in the countries that were either on the receiving end of bailout conditionality or which were the most significant funders of the bailout packages. We would have expected the migration crisis to have the greatest salience in countries that were 'front-line states' in terms of migrant destinations, or where the prospect of (further) influxes of EU-mandated Muslim migrants either reinforced what was already a salient domestic issue or where Muslim migration raised concerns about EU-enforced multiculturalism. Our expectation of the impact of Brexit would be much more diffuse and low-key in the short-term at least given the lack of obvious 'winners' and 'losers' and elite-level nature of the Article 50 negotiations; rather we would expect it to be assimilated into existing Eurosceptic narratives. The longer-term effects would depend on whether Brexit was perceived to be a 'success' and how transferable the British experience was felt to be to other cases.

Our main finding is that there has been a clear difference between the impacts of the different crises. The Eurozone crisis had a particularly powerful effect, perhaps unsurprisingly, in the party systems of those countries most affected by the bailout packages: Germany, Greece and Ireland (to a lesser extent, Slovakia, Finland, Spain, Portugal). The migration crisis had a particularly strong effect on party politics in the post-communist states of central Europe (Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, Czech Republic), and also Bulgaria – but, interestingly, not most of the post-communist Balkan EU members (Croatia, Romania, Slovenia) and candidates (Serbia), nor the post-Soviet Baltic states.

The UK's June 2016 referendum vote to leave the EU, on the other hand, had a very limited impact on national party politics, particularly when compared with these two earlier EU crises. Its main effect was to re-inforce and legitimize existing 'Eurosceptic narratives, rather than lead to an increase in Eurosceptic party politics overall. This was not surprising. Beyond the immediate news impact of the actual referendum vote, Brexit was a rather distant and abstract process, with little apparent popular resonance – certainly compared with the two earlier crises which, in some countries at least, appeared to have a powerful public salience and perceived impact upon many people's day-to-lives. The survey was conducted before Article 50 was invoked and this meant that EU states had not formally reacted to Brexit. However, the initial nature of the process appeared to suggest that it would be complicated, elite-driven and multi-institutional, and therefore have low public resonance throughout the Brexit negotiations; except in Britain, of course, where it has dominated and over-shadowed other political issues.

Within this overall framework it is possible to identify four clusters of countries' party systems where there were particularly interesting responses to the Brexit crisis, particularly when the impact of this was reinforced by or linked to the two earlier crises. Firstly, the 'Visegrad Four' post-communist Central European states – the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia – formed a significant, distinctive bloc in terms of the major impact of the European migration crisis. Although the Eurozone crisis had little impact on party politics in these countries (notwithstanding helping to bring down a Slovak government in 2011) and the Brexit referendum simply re-affirmed existing Eurosceptic narratives, the migration crisis did lead to a significant re-framing of the way that the EU was debated in these states, leading to a sharpening of Euroscepticism among mainstream political actors.

The notion of EU accession representing a historical-civilizational choice was a key factor in explaining why these countries voted overwhelmingly in 2003 accession referendums to join the EU and why it was very difficult for Eurosceptics to develop convincing narratives that appeared to go against the logic of the post-communist transformation process. However, in the view of its critics, by forcing these countries to adopt multi-culturalism, the EU's migrant relocation scheme raised significant doubts about whether the elites and publics in these countries were still making the same civilizational choices as their West European counterparts. This brought (Soft) Euroscepticism into the core of the party system involving not just right-wing conservative parties such as Law and Justice in Poland and Fidesz in Hungary, but centre-left governing parties such as the Czech Social Democrats and the social democratic Smer (Direction) party in Slovakia. On the other hand, in the Baltic republics security continued to trump all other considerations while in the Western Balkan 'front line' states the greater concern was that the EU managed the flows and shared the burden of migration rather than opposing compulsory migrant relocation in principle.

Secondly, there were a number of West European states where the three crises appeared to have had a significant and ongoing impact on the development of support for Eurosceptic parties. In Austria, Norbert Hofer, the presidential candidate of the Eurosceptic Freedom Party performed very well in the 2016 election, only defeated in a re-run second round run-off, and the party won more than one-fifth of the vote in the country's 2017 parliamentary election. The Eurozone crisis and the migration crisis both had the effect of crystallizing the Freedom Party's Euroscepticism but also, because of the direct impacts of both crises on Austria with a relatively large intake of migrants, also appeared to move the centrist Social Democrats and Christian Democrats to adopt a more critical tone towards the EU. The Brexit crisis also had an initial effect of bringing 'Oxit' into the political lexicon although subsequently all Austrian parties, even the Soft Eurosceptic ones, moved to a position of clarifying their support for EU membership in principle.

Denmark had a strong tradition of Eurosceptic public opinion and single issue parties and movements, and a propensity for EU referendums. Consequently, although Brexit and the two other crises only appeared to have a moderate impact on party Euroscepticism, the country had a strong Eurosceptic party on the radical right, the Danish People's Party, which was pushing for a 'British solution' and wanted a referendum to leave the EU. A new and reasonably well-supported right-wing Eurosceptic grouping, the New Civic Party, also emerged in 2016 and called for an EU membership referendum and for the Union to be re-focused solely on to free trade.

Italy had a large, radical anti-establishment Eurosceptic party in the Five Star Movement (Conti and Memoli 2015), which performed strongly in elections, and another medium-sized radical right Eurosceptic grouping, the Northern League. Party Euroscepticism in Italy was given much greater salience and opportunity by the Eurozone crisis, and sustained by the migration crisis, where the EU was accused even by mainstream parties of abandoning Italy. However, the main impact of the Brexit crisis appeared to be introducing the new word 'Italexit' into the political lexicon, although when they discussed this concept Eurosceptic parties in Italy referred mainly to leaving the Eurozone rather than the EU itself.

Thirdly, in some states where the two earlier crises boosted party Euroscepticism, the impact of the Brexit was not, or did not appear to be, as significant as some commentators expected. The Eurosceptic parties in question actually appeared to lose ground electorally – or, at least, did not match earlier expectations – and subsequently downplayed their opposition to European integration. France, for example, had a strong Eurosceptic party on the radical right, the National Front, and some smaller Soft Eurosceptic ones on the radical left. All three crises provided an impetus for the National Front: the Eurozone crisis created space for their Euroscepticism to flourish; the migration crisis allowed the increased focus on security to mesh with the party's policy on border control; and the Brexit crisis allowed it argue that 'Frexit' was clearly possible and galvanized the issue of a referendum on EU membership for the party. Eurosceptic candidates of left and right won a sizeable share in the first round of the April/May 2017 French presidential election. However, although National Front leader Marine Le Pen secured over one-third of the votes in the second round run-off, this was below expectations and actually rowed back from emphasizing Euroscepticism as the campaign progressed.

The Eurozone crisis was essential for the emergence and initial electoral success of the radical right Eurosceptic 'Alternative for Germany' party (Arzheimer 2015; Decker 2016), and also reinforced the Euroscepticism of the radical 'Left' party. However, while the migration crisis shifted the Alternative for Germany's policy focus, this came out more as anti-immigration than Eurosceptic and the party did little to tie these two issues together. Moreover, although

both the 'Alternative for Germany' and 'Left' used the Brexit vote to legitimize their existing opposition to EU integration and, although the former emerged unexpectedly as the third largest party, it actually had little salience in the September 2017 federal election.

In Greece, Eurosceptic parties could be found on both the radical left – SYRIZA and the Communist Party – and right: the Independent Greeks, the neo-fascist Golden Dawn and (before it started to wane) the radical right Greek Orthodox Rally. Not surprisingly, the Eurozone crisis had a substantial impact on the Greek party system and led to major debates about, and criticisms of, the process that led to the country's economic settlement with the EU. Similarly, the migration issue led to a particularly intense debate around accusations that the EU was not doing enough to help Greece and was proving incapable of handling another crisis. However, although Brexit contributed to the general sense of uncertainty about the future of the EU it did not have the same impact as the two earlier crises. Indeed, over time SYRIZA also became somewhat less Eurosceptic; although, given that it was the main governing party after 2015, this could have been part of what Sitter (2001) (writing about the Scandinavian countries) termed the 'government-opposition' dynamic, whereby previously Eurosceptic opposition parties often became more pro-EU when they entered office and vice versa (Taggart and Szczerbiak 2013).

Given the previous electoral successes of the radical right Eurosceptic Freedom Party of Geert Wilders, there was also considerable interest in how the Brexit crisis would play out in the Netherlands. Earlier, the Eurozone crisis had some impact when the Freedom Party attempted to use it to bolster its arguments about sovereignty, while the radical left (Soft Eurosceptic) Socialist Party also objected to the costs of the bailout packages. The Freedom Party also used the migration crisis to call for the closing of the Dutch borders. However, although the party originally lauded the UK's 'independence day', Brexit barely featured as one of the themes in the Freedom Party's March 2017 parliamentary election campaign when, although it slightly increased its share of the vote and remained the main opposition grouping, the party performed below expectations.

Fourthly, there was at least one interesting case where earlier crises had boosted party Euroscepticism but this actually appeared to go into reverse as a result of the Brexit crises, namely: Ireland. The Eurozone crisis pushed Euroscepticism to the fore of the Irish party system and transformed the salience of these issues in the country's political debate. However, Brexit appeared to dramatically reduce party-based Euroscepticism in Ireland due to: the economic uncertainty that it was felt to generate; the new opportunities it presented for Irish 'reunification' and for Ireland to act as a bridge between the UK and EU; and the fact that British Hard Euroscepticism came to be associated closely with English nationalism. Interestingly, there was

also some evidence that similar dynamics appeared to be at work in terms of public opinion across the whole of the EU (De Vries 2017).

Taken together, of all the three crises, it is clear that Brexit had the least impact, although we can also see that there were very different patterns of impact. This reflected the variations of national contexts and party systems shaping the way in which European integration was contested as a political issue. It means that we need to be cautious about over-generalizing about trends and more assiduous in taking full account of national contexts in tracing reactions to European phenomena.

7. Conclusions: competing narratives and British exceptionalism?

This paper has examined the link between recent EU crises and party-based Euroscepticism across Europe. We have used expert surveys with qualitative data to outline the contemporary state of party-based Euroscepticism. It has shown the widespread but uneven nature of party-based Euroscepticism. Through doing this we have identified four main frames through which the EU is contested in European states which focus on: economic factors, immigration, democracy/sovereignty and national factors. We then examined the impact of the three crises on European states which have, again, demonstrated significant variation but overall a relative lack of impact of Brexit on Euroscepticism.

When considering the impact of Brexit it is also important to distinguish the short-term and long-term – and the dynamic effects of one of the largest member states leaving the EU on the organization, both in terms of perceptions and the reality of how it operates (or even survives) in the future. On the one hand, if the Brexit process is a relatively smooth one and Britain is, or appears to be, successful outside the EU bloc there is a possibility that it could be used as a model for other Eurosceptic parties who could then shift to adopting a (Hard) Eurosceptic stance. On the other hand, if it is not a success, or not perceived to be one, this could discourage Soft Eurosceptic parties from adopting a Hard Eurosceptic stance, and all kinds of Eurosceptics (especially Hard ones) from articulating their position (as appeared to be happening in Ireland).

However, there are two reasons why even then the perceived ‘success’ or ‘failure’ of Brexit may not lead to long-term changes in the levels, nature and salience party Euroscepticism. Firstly, unless developments are completely unambiguous the question of whether or not Brexit is a ‘success’ or ‘failure’ is likely to be highly contested, with any subsequent developments filtered and interpreted through the different narratives of Euroenthusiasts and Eurosceptics respectively. Secondly, even if the outcome is seen as more clear-cut, questions will still be raised about British exceptionalism and whether broader

lessons can really be drawn; this is particularly likely to be the case if Brexit is a 'success'.

Note

1. EPERN was established in 2000 originally as the 'Opposing Europe Research Network', a network of scholars researching the comparative party politics of Euroscepticism. It then broadened its intellectual focus out to encompass the domestic politics of European integration and its impact on parties, elections and referendums more generally, with the study of Euroscepticism one (albeit important) strand within that; although in recent years, EPERN's main research focus has returned once again to party Euroscepticism. See: <http://www.sussex.ac.uk/sei/research/europeanpartieselectionsreferendumsnetwork>.

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